

I oppose loosening the rules designed to promote and protect diversity of media ownership. These rules were adopted to ensure that the public would receive a diverse range of viewpoints from the media, and not simply the opinions of a handful of media conglomerates. The newspaper/broadcast

cross-ownership cap is a crucial element of our democratic media, and it should not be weakened.

I am writing to express my views concerning the proposal to lift the cross-ownership ban to allow further media consolidation. Striking down both the National Ownership Rules for TV which limit the number of stations a company can control across the country (reaching no more than 35 percent of the national audience) and the prohibition against a company owning a cable system and a TV station in the same local market would remove an important safeguard ensuring the public's basic First Amendment rights. Existing policies provide for a diverse media marketplace of ideas, essential for a democracy. The ownership rules have enabled some TV programming decisions to be based on how a given program might help a community, rather than on whether it sold more advertising for its New York or Los Angeles owners. As a consequence of existing rules independent and local affiliated stations have been able to create public service and news programming very different from network fare.

These policies have been a critical component in ensuring that the electronic media serve the public interest, still a bedrock requirement of our nation's Communication Act.

It is crucial that the free speech rights of corporations not prevail over the public's. It is crucial that the First Amendment rights of viewers and citizens not be reduced to that of mere consumers and spectators, therefore I strongly urge you NOT to:

- 1) lift the 1975 ban on any one company's owning both a newspaper and a TV station in the same geographic area, and 2) end laws that limit the percent of the national audience that a single cable company can reach.